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Ex-Officer Wins Race Discrimination Case

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September 25, 2009 10:14 PM

Al Pefley

A former West Palm Beach police officer has won a big case. William McCray sued the police department and the city for racial discrimination.

Today, an all-white jury awarded him a small fortune.

It took the jury about seven hours to decide the case, and they determined that officer William McCray had been discriminated against because of the color of his skin.

The jury ordered the city to pay McCray \$230,000.

That's more than the \$150,000 that McCray and his lawyers asked for.

McCray was hired by West Palm Beach Police in 1992, and was fired in 2001 for allegedly committing perjury in an internal affairs investigation.

He sued for discrimination, saying the police department treated black officers who were accused of violating policy more harshly than white officers.

"This is huge! It's not just about me. It's the other officers, many who supported me, people in the community who supported me. I'm ecstatic. My name has been cleared," McCray said.

"Hopefully what this will mean is that when any employer, not just the city of West Palm Beach Police department, when any employer decides to discipline employees, that they do so carefully and equitably," said Isidro Garcia, McCray's attorney.

McCray is now a deputy with the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office.

The city of West Palm Beach can still appeal this verdict.

But McCray hopes they will decide the case has gone on long enough and pay him the \$230,000.

Besides the money, he also says he wants his job back at the West Palm Beach Police Department, and hopes to be reinstated.

"Hopefully now that there's a new administration I have confidence that the mayor can see that there were problems before she became mayor and we can fix this and move forward," McCray said.

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